September 2015


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Mr. John Hazen White, Jr. will provide the first Talking in the Library program of the academic year, reflecting and reinforcing the legacy of his mother. Mr. White will talk about the value of working, taking risks and inviting initiative. He will also consider how each of us answers the call to community service.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2015
4:30 P.M.

University Library
Mary Teft White Cultural Center

Free and open to the public

2015 Common Reading – In the Shadow of the Banyan, a novel by Vaddey Ratner.

September 28, 2015 10:27 AM
“IN THE SHADOW OF THE BANYAN” BY VADDEY RATNER

In the Shadow of the Banyan explores the Cambodian people’s resilience and perseverance despite forced exodus into labor camps, torture and starvation brought on by the rise of the Khmer Rouge – which killed at least 1.7 million people – through the eyes of a 7-year-old girl. Composed with poetic language and mythical tales, the story reveals that young Raami’s privileged existence – protected within the walls of her family’s royal compound – is far from what others were experiencing in the cities and countryside across Cambodia in the mid 1970s. But as the communist revolution sweeps the country, their royal bloodline cannot insulate them from the rebellion, and Raami’s family joins in the fight to survive.

Published in 2012, the book mirrors Ratner’s experiences as a young girl who lived through the communist uprising in Cambodia.

“By viewing the story through the eyes of a young character, students will be able to make a connection to historical events that may be far from their experiences, but in a way that allows them to envision themselves in that story,” says Director of the University Honors Program Becky Spritz, a member of the Common Reading Committee. “Fiction allows us to not distance ourselves from events that we’re reading about, and instead, to connect and be pulled into the story.”

In choosing a work of fiction that chronicles real events, the Common Reading Committee hopes to instill an appreciation of global perspectives and different cultures while exposing students to social justice issues that are endemic around the world, Spritz says.

The Common Reading program is an important part of the First Year Experience at RWU. First Year Experience programming will be focused on encouraging students to experience academic engagement inside and outside the classroom, learn to think critically, value service and civic engagement, and use services and resources that will make them successful student scholars.

Throughout the academic year, the University will explore In the Shadow of the Banyan through a series of events, including a visit to Roger Williams University from author Vaddey Ratner on Tuesday, October 13, at 7 p.m.

(Special thanks to the Common Reading Committee who were involved in the selection of this book: faculty members Becky Spritz, W. Brett McKenzie, Charlotte Carrington-Farmer, Jeremy Campbell and Paola Prado; as well as Feinstein College of Arts and Sciences Dean Robert Eisinger. via Allison Chase Padula, Associate Dean of Student Life)

Be sure to check out the exhibit in the University Library lobby. It showcases the last 10 years of Common Reading texts. The exhibit will run until October 19th.
John Hazen White, Jr.

September 29 at 4:30 p.m. in the Mary Tefft White Cultural Center at Roger Williams University Library

Mr. John Hazen White, Jr. (son of Mary Tefft ‘Happy’ White), will provide the first Talking in the Library program of the academic year, reflecting and reinforcing the legacy of his mother. Mr. White will talk about the value of working, taking risks and inviting initiative. He will also consider how each of us answers the call to community service.

Jim Shepard, author and professor of creative writing and film at Williams College

October 7 at 7:00 p.m. at Rogers Free Library

Jim Shepard is the author of seven novels, including most recently The Book of Aron, and four story collections. His third collection, Like You’d Understand, Anyway, was a finalist for the National Book Award and won The Story Prize. His short fiction has appeared in, among other magazines, Harper’s, McSweeney’s, The Paris Review, The Atlantic Monthly, Esquire, DoubleTake, the New Yorker, Granta, Zoetrope: All-Story, and Playboy, and he was a columnist on film for the magazine The Believer. Four of his stories have been chosen for the Best American Short Stories, and one for a Pushcart Prize. He teaches at Williams College.

Erin X. Smithers, Freelance Photographer

Jazz Photography, Blogging and the Family

October 20 at 4:30 p.m. in the Mary Tefft White Cultural Center at Roger Williams University Library

Moderated by Robert Eisinger, Dean of the Feinstein College of Arts and Sciences

Erin X. Smithers is a freelance photographer and blogger. Born and raised in China during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Erin’s first introduction to jazz was from both her father and John Coltrane’s song Alabama, along with stories about the Civil Rights Movement in America. These opened the door and started a lifelong love of jazz for her, along with helping to form her strong beliefs in non-violence. From her father, Erin learned to be of service to others and to the world, and to empower herself with endless curiosity and learning.
Semahagn Gashu Abebe, Visiting Ethiopian scholar

From the Ethiopian Classroom to Exile in America: a Rescued Scholar in Connecticut.
November 17 at 4:30 p.m. in the Mary Tefft White Cultural Center at Roger Williams University Library
Co-sponsored by the School of Justice Studies

Dr. Semahagn Gashu Abebe, a rescued scholar from Ethiopia, currently is a visiting fellow at University of Connecticut. Prior to leaving Ethiopia, Dr. Abebe worked for several years as a university lecturer, a public prosecutor and an attorney. His primary focus is in human rights law, conflict studies, governance and development in Africa, federalism, traditional institutions and the law and African studies. Dr. Abebe received his PhD from the University of Goettingen in Germany. He also holds two LLMs from universities in the Netherlands and Germany, and has published extensively in European, African, and American academic journals on international economic law, constitutional theory, and traditional institutions and human rights in Africa.

NOTE: These programs are part of the Talking-in-the-Library series (sponsored by the Mary Tefft White endowment). They occur in the Library’s Mary Tefft White Cultural Center at 4:30 PM unless otherwise noted.

Welcome Back!
SEPTEMBER 14, 2015 10:19 AM

Welcome back Students and Faculty! The Library Learning Commons has undergone some wonderful changes over the summer to benefit students and Learning Commons programming. Student Accessibility Services has been made more accessible to students by moving to the first floor behind the printing area. The Mary Tefft White Cultural Center is now the home of an “Instant Theater” to be used as previously for lectures, performances and events. When not in use, it transforms into high-tech student collaborative study space. Come check it out!